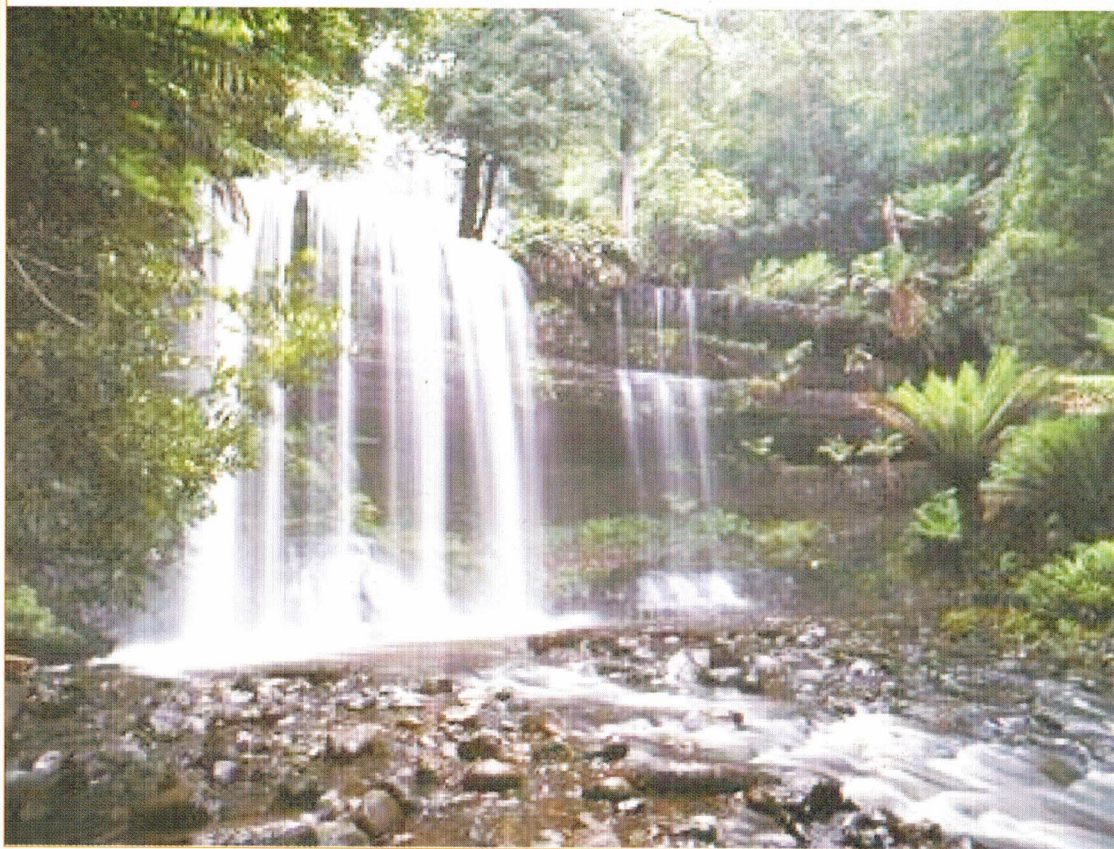


# SPiritUAL MESSAGE

*For Those who Reason*

*He who will not reason is a bigot,  
he who cannot is a fool,  
and he who dares not is a slave.*



*June 2003*



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## Spiritual Message (MONTHLY)

Editor in Chief

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Tel.: 2834 1654 / 2834 6079 / 2821 8609

Fax : 2823 6323

Email : hbshaikh@bom5.vsnl.net.in

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# Accepting Defeat

*In 1831, an American citizen went into business. In 1832 his business failed, so he entered the field of politics, but was no more successful in that sphere. He reverted to business in 1834, and was again a failure.*

In 1841, he had a nervous breakdown. Once recovered, he again entered the political arena, in the hope that his party would nominate him as a candidate for Congress. His hopes were dashed, however, when his name failed to appear in the list of candidates. The first chance he had to run for the Senate was in 1855, but he was defeated in the election. In 1858, he once again stood in the congressional elections, and once again lost.

The name of this repeatedly unsuccessful person was Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). So great were his services to his country that he is now known as the architect of modern America.

How did Abraham Lincoln manage to gain such a great reputation in American political and national history? How did he win his way to such a high position? According to Dr Norman Vincent Peel, the secret behind his success was that "he knew how to accept defeat."

The great secret of life is realism, and there is no form of realism greater than accepting defeat. To do so is to acknowledge the fact that, far from being ahead of others, one is behind them. In other words, it is to know where one stands in life. Once defeat is accepted, one is immediately in a position to start life's journey afresh, for such a journey can only commence from where one actually is; it cannot start from a point that one has not yet reached.

## Total Involvement

Elias Howe (1819-1867) was born in Massachusetts, U.S.A. He died at the young age of 48. Although his life was short, his contribution to the world of clothesthat of the sewing machinewill always be remembered.

The sewing machine invented by Elias Howe was at first utilized, not for sewing clothes, but for stitching shoes. The main breakthrough was the development of a lock-stitch by a shuttle carrying a lower thread and a needle carrying an upper thread which passed through a hole situated at the tip of the needle.



For thousands of years, people had been accustomed to making a hole at the base of the needle. So, following their lead, Elias Howe made the needle of his machine with a hole at the base, instead of at the tip as is now the practice. The placement of an eyelet, simple as it may seem to us now, remained a big hurdle for its inventor for quite some time. It was only a dream which finally brought about the desired solution.

As he was racking his brain to perfect his machine, Howe dreamt that he had been captured by a primitive tribe and was ordered to produce an operational sewing machine within twenty-four hours, failing which he would be speared to death. He tried hard, but could not accomplish it. When the deadline was up, the tribesmen surrounded him and raised their spears to kill him. Scared, yet still concentrating, he observed that each spear had an eyelet at the tip. He kept on gazing at the eyelet and then woke up with a start: the solution was right before him. For the machine to work, the placement of the hole had to be neither in the middle nor at the base, but at the tip. His lucky dream helped him, in 1845, to produce a sewing machine that would complete 250 stitches a minute.

What is a dream? It is the result of complete involvement. What we think about during the day, we dream about at night. Howe succeeded in inventing a machine only because he had engrossed himself in it to such an extent that he came to dream about it. Such is the case with any undertaking, whether one wants to invent a machine, or bring about a revolution in human life. One achieves success in one's aim only after complete involvement; only when the thing one has set one's mind on becomes a part of the subconscious existence that is reflected in one's dreams.

## Progress in the Long Haul

In 1782, an Englishman arrived in Glasgow with a wooden printing press. With such paltry resources he began to publish a newspaper entitled the *Glasgow Advertiser*. The newspaper was later renamed the *Glasgow Herald*. Two centuries later its daily circulation had risen to 200,000 copies.

What saved John Mennons, the founder of this newspaper, from succumbing to unfavourable and adverse circumstances was his limitless enthusiasm. It more than compensated for his lack of resources. The newspaper is still going strong after a period of two centuries, in spite of serious differences between partners which arose from time to time. It was fortunate that these could always be settled amicably without the work being disrupted.

Now, a peaceful course of action is not just one of the possibilities :  
it is the only feasible and result - oriented option.



The newspaper, which was started on a wooden press, is now being printed entirely on automatic machines. The letters are neither composed nor do they undergo the process of metal infusion: they are projected on the plates by laser beam. The paper is printed and folded automatically. Then it is wrapped in polythene and taken to the despatch department. The whole process is computerised.

It was only because of its continued publication that it could benefit from all the new improved techniques which were developed at different stages. If it had ceased publication after a period of time, all the techniques would have existed, but it would have failed to utilize them.

It shows how the accomplishment of any great work requires two things in particular: limitless enthusiasm and perseverance. Obviously great works can be brought to fruition only with the help of boundless energy, enthusiasm and perseverance. Without the long, and arduous labour which is essential in any such enterprise, the survival of this paper would have been impossible.

## **The Greatest Asset**

Lord William Wintock, British governor-general in India from 1828 to 1835, has the dubious distinction of being remembered as the man who ordered the destruction of the Taj Mahal in Agraan order which, happily, he was never able to have carried out. This was revealed at the turn of the century by the then viceroy, Lord Curzon. The East India Company had been going through hard times, Lord Curzon explained, and it was suggested to Lord Wintock that a sale of the Taj would fetch Rs. 100,000 enough to extricate the company from its financial crisis. News of the Company's intentions circulated, and there was stiff opposition to such a move. This infuriated Lord Wintock, who now went one step further and gave orders for the total destruction of the Taj. Opposition to the imperial command stepped up, with both Hindus and Muslims joining in one massive voice of protest. The danger that full-scale rebellion would ensue if the Taj was destroyed prompted the governor-general's advisers to persuade Lord Wintock to withdraw the order.

Contemporary comment had it that "the people did not save the Taj Mahal, it was saved by its own beauty. If the Taj Mahal had not been beautiful, it would not have won such overwhelming support; Hindus and Muslims would not have united behind it to foil the British government's designs."



Had the constructors of the Taj Mahal been able to reproduce in themselves the beauty which they produced so perfectly in their work of construction, they too would have been protected by their own quality. Just as virtue in a thing wins support for its cause, so virtue in humans has the same effect. It wins one friends from the enemy camp, appreciation even from strangers. A virtuous nature is the greatest asset a person can have, for with it comes support from all quarters.

The Taj Mahal's virtue lies in its beauty, while man's beauty lies in a virtuous nature. But man's beauty should not be like that of a snakea beautiful appearance marred by a venomous sting. How do men "sting"? By presenting a challenge to people's political and economic interests; by repeatedly resorting to violence in their dealings with others; by constantly alienating people with senseless, impulsive actions. Any virtue that one might have is cancelled out by such a "sting", and prevents one from winning people's affection.

It is the Taj Mahal's silent beauty that has won people's hearts. Who would have time for it if, in all its beauty, it tormented those who looked upon it?

## **All the Blood of One's Body**

Professor Paul Dirac died in Florida, U.S.A., in October 1984 at the age of 84. Recipient of the Nobel Prize and many other awards, he was considered after Newton and Einstein the greatest scientist of modern theory in effect the physics of the smallest part of the atom and his effective prediction of anti-matter before it had been experimentally discovered. His "anti-matter" and "anti-universe" became the leading physical ideas for explaining the character and contents of the contemporary universe, its origin and history. J.G. Crowther's obituary to Dirac in *The Guardian* (November 4, 1984) was fittingly given the headline "Prophet of the Anti-universe."

Dirac's discovery of the first anti-particle, known as a positron, revolutionized the world of nuclear physics. Students were naturally interested to know how he arrived at this world-shaking discovery. His answers often proved somewhat disconcerting. "When people asked him how he got his startling ideas about the nature of sub-atomic matter," Crowther writes, "he would patiently explain that he did so by lying on his study floor with his feet up so that the blood ran to his head."

Dirac's answer might appear tongue-in-cheek, but in fact what he said was quite true. Great intellectual feats can only be accomplished by letting all the blood of one's body run to one's head by channelling all one's energy into the intellectual pursuit one had undertaken.

Few people actually do this. They rather tend to diversify their efforts. Their failure to concentrate on a single goal renders all their efforts incomplete and ineffective. Every worthwhile task demands all the strength that an individual can muster. The only way to be successful in one's work is to give it all one has.



# After Being Broken

The atom is the final unit of matter, just as the individual is the final unit of society. If one succeeds in breaking an atom one does not destroy it; rather one converts it into a greater force, known as atomic energy. Matter is energy in a solid form and energy matter in a dispersed form. When the atoms of matter are broken and converted into atomic energy, they are transformed into a force much more potent than in their material form.

A locomotive consumes two tons of coal in seventy miles; a motorcar uses up a gallon of petrol every twenty to forty miles. But when uranium weighting just twelve pounds is converted into atomic energy, it is able to convey a high-speed rocket on a 40,000 mile journey into space. That's how great the difference is between ordinary material energy and atomic energy.

So it is with that unit of society known as man. When man is 'broken,' his horizons expand vastly. Just as breakage does not destroy matter, so defeat does not ruin man. Matter increases in strength when broken up. So man, when defeated, gains new, increased strength.

When man is beset by defeat, his inner forces are released. His senses are aroused. His concealed strength comes to the fore and he sets about redressing his setback. Spurred on with new resolve and determination, he devotes himself to the task of regaining what has been lost. An irresistible spirit arises within him. Nothing can arrest his advance. Like a river flowing to the sea, he surmounts every obstacle in relentless pursuit of his goal.

The occurrence of an atomic explosion in matter turns it into a vastly more powerful substance. The human personality, too, contains huge, latent potential. This potential bursts out into the open when there is an eruption within one's soul. It breaks free when some shattering disaster afflicts one. The strings that have held one down are torn apart and begin to vibrate to the tune of life.

## Social Behaviour

A certain Mr Ajwani was appointed as a sales representative in a large pharmaceuticals firm in Calcutta in 1965. His predecessor had been engaged at a monthly salary of Rs 1,200 plus rail expenses. Mr Ajwani made it clear that he would not accept less than Rs 3,000 per month and that he would only agree to travel by air when he had to visit other towns to take orders. The director who was interviewing him pointed out that, in terms of his total expenses, that was much too much. But Mr Ajwani replied, "I will give you 'much too much'



work in return. Just give me a chance and you will see". There was something very engaging about the way he put his arguments, and finally he was appointed as the firm's representative for the area of Gujarat.

In those days a certain famous lady doctor had a flourishing practice in one of the towns of Gujarat, but although her clinic required great quantities of medicines, she refused point blank to meet pharmaceuticals agents if they were males. It had so happened that an agent had once used his knowledge of palmistry as a pretext to hold her hand and then kiss it. After this very disturbing affair, she had come to feel apprehensive about the behaviour of other agents, and refused to allow any of them even to enter her clinic.

When Mr Ajwani was on the point of setting off on a business trip which was to take him to this very city, he told his director that he was confident that he would get orders from this lady doctor. The director told him not to be so naive, for everyone knew that this was a sheer impossibility. Her attitude was so well-known that none of the agents had the remotest hope of ever meeting her, far less of receiving orders from her.

Undaunted, Mr Ajwani set off. In the plane, he found himself seated next to an elderly lady who was obviously of a good family. They had hardly taken off when the old lady had a sudden fit of coughing. Some sputum came into her mouth and she became quite flustered. Mr Ajwani, seeing how awkward she felt, quickly placed his handkerchief in front of her mouth so that she could spit into it. Then he went to the bathroom and dispose of it. His thoughtfulness impressed her greatly and they chatted amicably for the rest of the flight. When the plane landed, they disembarked together, he helping her with her hand luggage. On coming out of the 'arrivals' lounge, she was distressed to discover that no car had come to receive her. Mr Ajwani once again offered to be of help, saying that he could easily drop her at her home by taxi before going on to his hotel. She gratefully agreed to this and, on reaching home, made a note of his name and address before saying goodbye to him.

Shortly afterwards, her daughter came back home and was surprised to find her mother there. She felt very sorry that the message about her arrival had never reached her, and that her mother had had no car to receive her and bring her home. "You must have had difficulty in coming home alone," she said to her mother. "Not at all," the old lady replied, and, her eyes shining with gratitude, she told her the whole story of the kind gentleman she had met on the plane. The daughter was very favourably impressed and immediately telephoned Mr Ajwani at his hotel to thank him and invite him to dinner. Mr Ajwani promptly accepted her invitation, and, when they were introduced to each other, he discovered, to his great surprise, that she was none other than the famous lady doctor who hated male agents. When she learnt that Mr Ajwani represented a pharmaceuticals company, she lost no time in placing a sizeable order with him, and added that since she always needed large quantities of medicines in her clinic, he could take it that she would be a regular customer and that he could keep sending her supplies every month.



After dinner, he immediately trunk-called his boss from his hotel to give him the good news. His boss could hardly believe his ears and thought at first that he must be joking. But two days later, he thought quite differently when he received the cheque and the order signed by her.

On a subsequent occasion when I had occasion to meet Mr Ajwani, I asked him, just by the way, to give me some good business tips. He replied, "Polite conversation and gentlemanly behaviour." I added, "Yes, even when there appears to be no obvious advantage!"

Polite behaviour falls into two categories. One follows the conventional etiquette reserved for relatives, acquaintances and people with whom one's interests are associated. It is socially beneficial in that it makes relationships easier, smoother and more generally civilized. Even if such behaviour is sometimes artificial, it has a certain positive, social value. The other kind of good behaviour is completely natural, straight from the heart and based on genuine consideration for others. When it becomes a matter of habit with people from all walks of life, it is of inestimable value in all human relations. It is not, of course, something which one "switches on" in the hopes of immediate reward, but is something rather which eventually benefits one in innumerable, often intangible, ways, simply because it makes for social harmony at its best.

## **Life's Labours are Never Lost**

Iana Devangaddy of Bangalore was a student at Cambridge when Jawahar Lal Nehru went to study there. He developed a close association with Nehru. It was because of this relationship that his son, Deren Angaddy, heard a lot about Nehru during his childhood. Impressed with his personality, Deren used to impersonate him. Later Deren became a film actor.

When Attenborough planned to produce a film on Gandhi, with an investment of about \$ 25 million. Deren was selected to play the role of Nehru. However, after six months he was told by the film producers that he was being dropped from the list of actors and that Roshan Seth had been chosen to play this role instead. This decision was made six months after Deren Angaddy had been offered the role, during which time he had worked hard to perfect his role. The news shocked him to the point where he committed suicide.

Why did Deren Angaddy take such a drastic step? Was it because he had worked hard to develop an ability which had no further use? Seemingly this had plunged him into a depression so deep that he took his life.



People tend to overlook the fact that professional skill and ability achieved by hard struggle is an investment in itself. Even if they fail to find an immediate outlet, life's labours are never lost in the long run. Sooner or later opportunities are bound to present themselves to draw on such painfully acquired skills.

## An Economic Pearl Harbour

In December 1941, during the second world war, the U.S.A.'s top naval base, Pearl Harbour, on the Pacific island of Hawaii, was attacked without prior warning by the Japanese. So severe was the bombardment that, of the hundred odd naval vessels anchored there, only a handful survived. This had the immediate effect of bringing America into the war as one of the Allied Powers. Up till that point, the U.S.A. had had no direct involvement in hostilities save as a supplier of armaments to the enemies of Japan. The Japanese attack had been uncalled-for and ill-considered, but they did not realize the magnitude of their error until 1945, when America finally took its revenge by dropping the first-ever atom bombs on two of Japan's major industrial centres, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus annihilating Japan as a military power. The Americans then kept a tight military and political hold over Japan. But the latter country, astonishingly, recuperated from the horror of large-scale atomic devastation, and proceeded to adapt itself to an entirely new set of circumstances. Before the second world war, it had relied on the power of weapons. But after witnessing the destruction they caused, it relinquished their use and set about reconstructing the country along entirely peaceful lines. Having once adopted this course, the Japanese showed great versatility, resilience and assiduity, and their success has been such that Japan is now considered the second greatest industrial power in the entire world today. Its trade surplus is 37 billion dollars, more even than that of the U.S.A. In the field of industry, the victors have been defeated by the vanquished. Simply by accepting the fact that aggression could not pay dividends and then channelizing its potential within the field of industry, Japan has managed quite miraculously to supersede all the other nations of the world.

The Americans are greatly upset at this state of affairs and refer to the present 'invasion' of Japanese goods as an Economic Pearl Harbour. A book recently published in America, under the title of "Japan-Number One", has become a best-seller. It clearly shows that Japan has far outrun the U.S.A. in business and will soon supersede Britain. So far as foreign exchange is concerned, Japan is the wealthiest country in the world, its foreign exchange reserves totalling 74 billion dollars in 1984. (*The Times of India*, 13-14 June, 1985).

How did Japan turn its military defeat into an economic victory? By encouraging patience and perservance and avoiding provocation, it concentrated its energies on peaceful



(and, of course, remunerative) fields, rather than indulge in retaliatory violence. It initially accepted the military and political supremacy of other nations, quickly adapting itself to new scales of values, then set about the economic rehabilitation of the country without wasting a single moment on bemoaning lost opportunities, blaming others for its misfortunes or on pointless nostalgia. Rather than make further mistakes Pearl Harbour having been the worst it concentrated all of its attention on seizing existing opportunities. In short, Japan accepted the blame for its own destruction, and, once having done so, was able seriously to launch itself on its own economic uplift.

We must never lose sight of the fact that we are not lone travellers on this earth. There are always others who are trying to race ahead of us in this world of competition. The resulting situation can be approached in two entirely different ways. One is to collide with anything which obstructs our path. The other is to circumvent obstacles and then to go on our way. Clearly, the first is self-destructive, while the second, in avoiding confrontations, is much more likely to prove advantageous. A ship which sails straight at a rock or an iceberg is doomed to disaster. It is the ship which veers temporarily off its course to avoid the reefs which will eventually sail safely into harbour. Similarly, Japan, by giving up ideas of military supremacy, has reached a much more worthwhile objective economic supremacy.

It is worth remembering that Hiroshima and Nagasaki, once symbols of Japan's total annihilation as a military power, are now symbols, forty years later, of Japan's stunning economic success.

## Having One's Share

The Bata Shoe Company is named after the family which founded it. Originally the Bata family lived in Czechoslovakia, where they began manufacturing shoes as far back as 1620. Thomas Bata Senior, father of the present proprietor, established a shoe factory for the first time in 1925. His career was cut short though when his private plane lost its bearings in heavy fog and crashed, burning him to death on the spot. On his father's death, Thomas Bata Junior became president of Bata Ltd.

The Bata Company, the largest shoe manufacturer in the world, is now doing business in 114 different countries, having sold 315 million pairs of shoes throughout the world in 1982. Its greatest volume of business is in Canada, with India ranking second. It has 90 thousand direct employees, not to mention thousands of indirect employees.

Mr. Thomas Bata Junior visited India for the fortieth time in 1983. On this occasion, a correspondent asked him what he thought was the most important factor in his success. Mr Bata replied, "In manufacturing shoes which range from cheap to costly, we take special care to fulfill the actual needs of our consumers. We do, in fact, look after our customers better than anyone else."



What we learn from the Bata Shoe Company's success is that if you want to take, you should try to give. It is only in giving to others that we can have our share too.

## Message Without Words

A certain student from Rajasthan had failed in his high school examinations. He appeared again the following year, but failed again. After having failed for the third time the next year he was so ashamed of his performance that he left his home, unable to show his face to his family.

He just kept walking about aimlessly. After a long time he stopped at a well to quench his thirst. Women and children had gathered around it, filling their pots by turns. There he caught sight of something. Something small, but of great significance. He was deeply moved, and his thirst was gone. All of a sudden he felt as though he had found something far greater than the water he had come for. What happened was quite simple. The villagers who visited the well for water, usually brought two earthen pots. They would place one pot on a stone near the well while letting the other down on a rope inside the well to draw water. To his astonishment, the part of the stone on which the pot was placed had rubbed away and there was a hollow there. The pot was made of earth, he thought, but when it was placed on the same spot over and over again, it had worn away the stone which was a far harder a substance. The strong element had given way to the weak, just through constant action. "Then why should I not succeed in my examinations if I too persevere? I can surely overcome my shortcomings by putting greater effort into my studies!"

Such thoughts brought him to a halt. He immediately decided to go back home and start working hard on his studies once again. The following year he appeared for the fourth time in his high school examinations. This time the result, astonishingly, was the opposite of the previous one. He had done his papers so well this time that he had first class marks. After having failed three times he had finally distinguished himself. The lesson of the stone had worked like a miracle and this had altered his attitude altogether. The same student who had run away from home, unable to face defeat, had come to stand first in all the examinations he took. When he topped in his M.A. examinations, he was given a scholarship to study abroad and from there he took his doctorate.

This may be a solitary instance that occurred in an isolated village, but, indeed, in every place there exists such a "stone" which, by pointing out man's shortcomings and failures, can teach him a lesson provided he shows sufficient receptiveness to the message it conveys. If he only cares to look, he will find around him some such "stone" which will set him on the right course again.



# Working One's Way Up

A man entered a certain recruiting office and said, "I want to join as a soldier."

"But how old are you?" the sergeant asked.

"Sixty," was the man's reply

"You know quite well that sixty is too old for you to become a soldier."

"All right, if 60 is too old for a soldier, don't you need any generals?"

If one wants to start one's career as a general, one will be hard put to it to do so. It's just like a race where one can't leap straight from the starting point to the finishing line. To succeed in anything, we have to be like the tree, starting from the seed, growing slowly and putting out branches, twigs, leaves and flowers when the appropriate times come around. Similarly, business starts with investing money, not with earning profits. The construction of a house starts with the laying of the foundation, not with the tiling of the roof. The factory begins with the acquisition of machinery and not with the sale of the end products. Congregational matters are very much on a parallel. They begin from the inculcation in individuals of a sense of purpose and an understanding of the importance of hard work, honesty, endurance and unity.

Not until the individuals of a nation are imbued with these important ideals to a very high degree can measures be taken for the advancement of the cause. If we ignore the importance of preconditioning, our missionary ventures are bound to end in failure. Any attempt to launch a movement without a solid, national infrastructure would be like trying to roof a house without raising its walls. A roof put up in this way is bound eventually to collapse on one's head. In much the same way, any steps taken before individuals have been properly prepared for them will lead inevitably to failure and chaos even death and destruction. They will be found to lead only further and further away from the true objectives.

## Warding off Danger

I once went to spend a few days at a religious institution situated on the outskirts of Alwar, a city in Rajasthan. To the one side there extended the buildings of the city and, to the other, there were open fields stretching far and wide. During my stay there, I went out one evening at sunset to have a walk in the fields. Unfortunately, after I had gone some distance, I was rushed at by a pack of dogs all barking and snarling. I had to throw stones at them to chase them away. On my return, I mentioned to my host how I had almost been set upon by these animals. My host, Maulana Mufti Jamaluddin Qasmi, who presides over the institution,



simply smiled and said, "All right, I'll come with you tomorrow." The following day, we set off together, the Maulana having armed himself with a stick which was quite long enough to be visible from afar. When we reached the spot where I had come upon the dogs the day before, they were there all right, but, there was not so much as a whimper out of them, far less a bark. Not one of them made a move to rush at us. So we passed by undisturbed. On our way back, they were still there, but, they did not create a commotion this time either, and we reached home without any untoward incidents, "That was the miracle of the big stick," said the Maulana with a smile. "Yesterday you were unarmed, so those wretched curs dared to attack. Today it was a very different story, for the dogs, immediately realizing that you were well-equipped to deal with them, lost courage and gave up any idea they had of attacking. A dog will attack you only if he thinks you are vulnerable. But he would not do so if he found you armed."

There are certain of the human species too, who sadly, will behave well only when you have a 'big stick' in your hand. But the moment they find you defenseless, they become bold. They are the type of people who are brave when dealing with those weaker than themselves, and who are out and out cowards when confronted with anyone stronger. This unfortunate state of affairs calls for people to be well-equipped to deal effectively with such unworthy individuals. In society, one ought, in principle, to be peaceable, humble and courteous to all. But, to be practical, one should be well armed to meet adverse situations, so that others are discouraged at the outset from harming one. Where would all our beautiful roses be, if nature had not provided them with innumerable thorns?

## Aiming High

Several disgruntled Muslim youths stood in an agitated group outside the University Offices, loudly bewailing the fact that they had not been admitted to the various academic courses they had chosen. Without exception, they blamed circumstances for their failure to gain entry to the University. Some also blamed the environment for their having remained out of work for so long. An elderly gentleman, who was sitting close by, could not help overhearing their lamentations. Finally, he could contain himself no longer, and he jumped up and said to them, "I am sure you feel your complaints are well-founded, but, why compete at a level where the seats are all bound to be taken already? That will get you nowhere. You should attempt to enter at the top, for that is where you will find the vacant seats. Produce distinctive qualifications and there will be no question of your being rejected. There are always places at the top for people of merit. Be you student, businessman, lawyer or doctor, try to distinguish yourself in whatever field you have chosen, for that is the sure way to success. Even if it is only something like a mousetrap that you have the reputation for making



well, people will come knocking at your door for it. The real mistake is to produce the same quality of goods with which the market is already flooded. It is pointless to do this, then complain about being discriminated against. If you work hard and bend your brains to producing something superior in design and quality to what is already on the market, people will flock to buy it.

“No society is ever free of prejudice and narrow-mindedness; it is just one unfortunate aspect of community-living. The difference in this from one society to another is only one of degree. But these are barriers which can definitely be surmounted through diligence and application. Let us suppose that you have passed an examination with 45 percent marks, giving you a very slight advantage over a rival who only has forty percent. In such a case, it is quite conceivable that prejudice could come in your way, and your application could be rejected in favour of your rival's. But let us suppose that you had eighty percent marks. All the walls of prejudice would then have to crumble and fall in the face of superior talent. No one would then dare deny you your rights. Does it not make sense then to try your hardest to reach the highest pinnacles of academic success? It is only a question of working much harder than your rival. Then the world will be convinced that you have not only set yourself the highest standards, but have also lived up to them.

Once launched upon life with superior knowledge and skills, there is no question of your failing to find the place you deserve. Every door will open to you, because it is invariably the highly qualified who are in demand.”

## Teaching the Teachers

For about twenty years, between 1950 and 1970, Japan used to import superior industrial technology from the west, at times by outright purchase, but more often by borrowing, or on a credit basis. As a result, Japan today stands on its own feet economically and is in a position to export not only its goods but also its know-how to other countries.

Thanks to its advanced technical expertise, it now has the opportunities to help other countries, enter into friendly relations with them and draw up contracts to do business with them. Some of their feats include working on the latest irrigation projects in Thailand, giving instruction in computer programming in Singapore, constructing iron and steel factories in South Korea and China, and setting up petro-chemical industries in the Middle East, etc. The Japanese learnt iron and steel making from the Americans and have now developed it so extensively that they are at present exporting their skills to the Americans themselves. Japan, once the learner, is now so well placed in so many fields particularly in communication and



electronics, that America is seeking its technical assistance in many of its important military departments. The students are now teaching their teachers. A newspaper correspondent reports: "Now the flow is out instead of in." (*The Hindustan Times*, June 11, 1981)

Japan willingly submitted to industrial tutelage for 20 years and, as a result, has attained the position of industrial dominance that it occupies today. If it had chosen not to recognise the supremacy of others at that crucial point in its development, and had felt too proud to go to them for help, it could never have had such resounding successes.

All too often, we have to lose in order to gain. We have to resign ourselves to our lowly position until we can work ourselves up to more satisfactory heights. Those who recognise this necessity as one of the facts of life will have a better chance of succeeding in this world than those who expect to be able to climb straight to the top without first having accepted a position of humility, or who persist in blaming others for their failures. Patience, fortitude and tenacity are the virtues which will see us through to success, provided they are always leavened by humility.

## The Age of Perversion

God subsequently sent Noah as His messenger. He was granted an exceptionally long life of nine hundred and fifty years. During this extended period, he continued to show people the right path, generation after generation. But only a few people heeded his words. The rest persisted in their sinful ways. Then, in accordance with the ways of God, a huge flood engulfed them by way of punishment. Noah and his small band of followers were saved in a boat, while all the rest were drowned.

At that time, human population was probably concentrated only in the region of Asia known as Mesopotamia. The men and women saved in the wake of this flood settled afterwards in other parts of the world. Their race multiplied until it spread over the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe.

After the death of Noah, his people continued for a considerable time to adhere to the divine path shown by him. But again rot set in in later generations and they again deviated from the path of monotheism as well as of justice. God's messenger the Qur'an has mentioned twenty six by name continued to come for several thousand years. The Hadith tell us that about one hundred thousand messengers came to the world. In this way a long period elapsed between Adam and Messiah, when God's messengers continued to come to the world in almost every generation. But each time only a few individuals believed in them. The majority rejected these prophets in every age.



# The Problem of Evil

Those who want to interpret human history in the light of predetermined law as is done in the physical world, cannot but meet with failure. While the physical world may be explainable within the framework of predeterminism, the events of the human world are simply not amenable to interpretation in terms of any such law.

Others want to interpret the events of the human world in the context of freedom. But they are not satisfied either, with their interpretation. This is because in the case of human freedom, the suffering experienced in this world has no valid understandable explanation. The failure of both these interpretations is due to the fact that they attempt to explain the whole in the light of a part which is not at all possible.

The truth is that the right principle by which to interpret human history is neither that of predeterminism nor of freedom. According to Islam, there is only one correct principle to interpret human history and that is the principle of test. Man has been placed in the present world for the purpose of being tested. On the outcome of this test will depend the eternal future of all mankind.

Favourable circumstances were a sine qua non for this test in the world. Predeterminism had to a certain extent to be a feature of these circumstances as a guarantee against any obstacle coming in the way of carrying out man's trial. On the other hand, the element of freedom was also essential in order that the intentions and actions of each individual could be properly judged. For man can be granted the credit for a good deed only on the condition that, despite having the opportunity to indulge in bad deeds, he chooses of his own free will to act virtuously.

If in this world everything had been totally predetermined, the element of trial would have been absent. However the granting of freedom did involve the risk of some people misusing their freedom and misuse it they did. This gave rise to the problem of human suffering which results from evil, yet this suffering, or evil, is a very small price to pay for a very precious thing. According to Islam that person is most precious who leads his life in this world in such a manner that despite facing all sorts of temptations he succeeds in overcoming them. Despite having the power to misuse his freedom, he refrains from doing so. Despite the possibility of leading an unprincipled life, he chooses of his own free will to be a man of principle. To identify such individuals, it is essential that an atmosphere of freedom prevail in the world. This is not possible under any other system.

If you behave properly with those holding divergent views from you, then you deserve to be credited with having an excellent character.



# The Example of the Prophet of Islam

The Prophet of Islam received his first revelation in 610 in Makkah. God ordained that he carry out the mission of Tawhid. There arose a great problem in relation to this mission.

The house of the Kabah, which was built as the house of monotheism by the Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail, later on became a centre of polytheism with 360 idols in it. The first revelation might well have demanded the purification of the Kabah. But the first revelation made in the Quran was: Purify your vestments. (74:4) This means to purify one's moral character. If, in the first stage the Prophet had been commanded to purify the Kabah while Makkah was still under the domination of the idolaters, this would have surely precipitated clash and confrontation. Therefore, according to the command of the first revelation, the Prophet continued to perform his prayers peacefully in the Kabah for a period of 13 years, even though it housed several hundred idols.

Similarly, the Prophet and his companions circumambulated the Kabah on the occasion of Umrah al-Hudaybiya in 629. During that time the Kabah still housed 360 idols.

The Prophet of Islam proceeded thus in order to avoid war and confrontation with the idolaters, and so that the atmosphere of peace should be maintained. The entire life of the Prophet is a practical demonstration of this peace-loving policy. At the time of migration from Makkah, the idolaters were all set to wage war, but the Prophet avoided this by quietly leaving his homeland for Madina.

On the occasion of the Hudaibiyah treaty in 628, a state of war prevailed. But the Prophet unilaterally accepted all the conditions of the idolaters and negotiated a peace treaty. On the occasion of the battle of Khandaq, the 12,000 strong army of the Quraysh had camped at the borders of Madinah in order to do battle. But the Prophet and his companions dug a long trench to set up a buffer between himself and his enemies, thus avoiding bloodshed.

The mission of Islam is based on monotheism. The goal of Islam is to make people realize the existence of the one and only God and to strive to bring about a revolution in their hearts and minds in order that they may love God as is His due. And the greatest concern of man should be to fear and worship his Creator. (2:165)

Such a dawah mission cannot afford wars and violent confrontations. When a state of war and violence prevails, the normal atmosphere is vitiated and such circumstances as would foster intellectual movements and spiritual reformation cannot be effectively created. It cannot be denied that peaceful circumstances produce a propitious environment for Islam, while violent circumstances inevitably result in antagonism towards Islam.



# Peace and Justice

One great problem for Muslims is that peace does not necessarily guarantee them justice. This has caused Muslims to become violent and to neglect opportunities for *da'wah*. In modern times Muslims want a peace which brings them justice. But according to the law of nature, this kind of peace can never be achieved, that is why Muslims the world over are in a state of physical and mental unrest. Distressed in their minds, they have become violent in their thinking and in their actions.

The truth is that peace does not automatically produce justice. Peace in actual fact simply opens up opportunities for the achievement of justice. At the time of Hudaybiyya the Prophet Muhammad  $\text{œ}$  had not found justice. He had achieved peace but only by delinking it from justice. The Prophet had made this peace not to exact justice but to receive the opportunities. And great opportunities for *da'wah* action did open up with the establishment of peace. The Prophet exploited these opportunities in full measure. Therefore, in just a few years' time the Prophet not only ensured justice, but set Islam upon a much more solid footing.

The Muslims of the present day have to understand this secret of nature. Only then will it be possible for them first to find peace, then ultimately their desired goal of justice.

In October 1997, I met a 36-year old European, Leon Zippo Hayes, who was born in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand. After having studied Islam, he has changed his religion. His Islamic name is Khalilur Rahman. Passing through Muslim countries he is going to perform Hajj by land.

During the conversation he said that in modern times Muslims are engaged in bloody war at many places, at some places with others and at other places among themselves. This had led him (like many others) to conclude that perhaps Islam was a religion of violence. Later, he studied the Qur'an with the help of translations, and when he reached this verse in the Qur'an: 'Whoever killed a human being should be looked upon as though he had killed all mankind (5:32),' he said that he was so moved that he could not believe that it was there in the Qur'an.

This incident is broadly indicative of the thinking of non-Muslims on Islam. On seeing the actions of Muslims, people today find it hard to believe that Islam may be a religion of peace. But if Muslims stop engaging in violent activities and give people the opportunity to appreciate Islam in its original form, then certainly a great number of people would realise as they never had before that Islam was a peaceful religion and they would rush to it, saying that it was exactly the religion which their souls had been seeking all along.



# GOD ARISES

A book by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in serials.

## Challenge of Modern Knowledge

## Chapter I

With the splitting of the atom, all of man's conceptions of matter have been drastically altered. In fact, the advance of science in the past century has culminated in a knowledge explosion the like of which has never before been experienced in human history, and in the wake of which all ancient ideas about God and religion have had to be re-examined. This, as Julian Huxley puts it, is the challenge of modern knowledge. In the following pages, I propose to answer this challenge, for I am convinced that, far from having a damaging effect on religion, modern knowledge has served to clarify and consolidate its truths. Many modern discoveries support Islamic claims made 1400 years ago that what is laid down in the Quran is the ultimate truth, and that this will be borne out by all future knowledge.

We will show them our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Modern atheistic thinkers dismiss religion as being unfounded in fact. They maintain that it springs from man's desire to find meaning in the universe. While the urge to find an explanation is not in itself wrong, they hold that the inadequacy of our predecessors' knowledge led them to wrong conclusions, namely, the existence of a God, or gods, the notions that creation and destruction were a function of the godhead, that man's fate was of concern to God, that there was a life after death, in heaven or hell, as warranted by the morality of light of advanced learning, man is now in a position to make a re-appraisal of traditional ways of thinking and to rectify errors of interpretation, just as in secular matters he has already exploded myths and overturned false hypotheses whenever facts and experience have forced the truth upon him.

According to Auguste Comte, a well-known French philosopher of the first half of the nineteenth century, the history of man's intellectual development can be divided into three stages – the *theological stage*, when events of the universe are explained in terms of divine powers, the *metaphysical stage*, in which we find no mention of specific gods (although external factors are still referred to in order to explain events) and the *stage of positivism*, where events are explained in terms of common laws deduced from observation and calculation without having recourse to spirit, God or absolute power. We are now passing through the third intellectual stage which, in philosophical terms, is known as *Logical Positivism*.

<sup>1</sup>Quran, 41:53.



Scientific empiricism, or logical positivism, became a regular movement in the second quarter of the 20th century, but as a trend of thought, it had already— long before — taken hold of people's minds. From Hume and Mill up to the time of Bertrand Russell, many philosophers have been its proponents, and it has now become the most important contemporary trend of thought, buttressed as it is by numerous centres of research and propagation all over the world. A dictionary of philosophy published in New York gives the following definition of logical positivism :

All knowledge that is factual is connected with experiences, in such a way that verification or direct or indirect confirmation is possible (p.285).

Anti-religionists feel, therefore, that man's recent mental evolution is the very antithesis of religious thinking. Modern, advanced knowledge has it that reality is only that which can stand up to the tests of observation and experience, whereas religion is based on a concept of reality which cannot in this way be subjected to analysis and scientifically proved: it follows then that it has no basis in actuality. In other words, religion gives an unrealistic account of real events. Since man's knowledge was limited in ancient times, the correct explanations of natural phenomena were bound to elude him. This being so, the suppositions he made which hinged on religion were distinctly far-fetched and, at best, tangential. But, thanks to the universal law of evolution, man has at last emerged from the darkness in which he was engulfed, and now, in the light of modern knowledge, it is possible for him to discard odd, conjectural beliefs and arrive at the true nature of things by purely empirical methods. T. R. Miles writes :

It might be said that metaphysicians of the past have done something comparable to writing a cheque without adequate funds in the bank. They have used words without proper 'cash' to back them; they have been unable to give their words 'cash-value' in terms of states of affairs.

"The Absolute is incapable of evolution and progress' is a grammatically correct sentence; but the words are like a dud cheque, and cannot be 'cashed'."

All those things which were formerly attributed to supernatural forces are now wholly explainable in terms of natural causes, modern thinking having it that the "discovery" of God was a mere assumption arising from ignorance. With the spread of knowledge, this belief has automatically disappeared. Julian Huxley writes:

Newton showed that God did not control the movements of the planets, Laplace in a famous aphorism affirmed that astronomy had no need of the god hypothesis : Darwin and Pasteur between them did the same for biology : and in our own century the rise of scientific

<sup>1</sup> Religion and the Scientific Outlook, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., P , 20,



psychology and the extension of historical knowledge have removed gods to a position where they are no longer of value in interpreting human behaviour and cannot be supposed to control human history or interfere with human affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Physics, psychology and history have proved conclusively that all those events which man explained in terms of the existence of a God or gods, or some abstract 'Power' had entirely different causes but that man, steeped in ignorance, continued to speak of them in terms of religious mystery.

In the world of physics, Newton is the hero of this revolution. It was he who put forward the theory that the universe is bound by certain unchangeable principles, there being certain laws according to which all celestial bodies revolve. Later, many other scholars carried this research forward to the point where all events on earth and in the heavens allegedly took place according to the immutable "Law of Nature."

After this discovery, it was but natural that the concept of an active and omnipotent God as the power which made things move appeared meaningless. At the most this discovery allowed for a God who had initially set the universe in motion. Therefore, Newton himself, along with other likeminded scientists, believed in God as the Prime Mover. Voltaire for his part said that God had created the universe in just the same way as a watch-maker made a watch, assembling the parts, arranging them in a particular order, but afterwards having nothing to do with it. Hume subsequently abolished this "inactive and worthless God" by advancing the argument that we had seen watches being made, but that since we had not seen the world in the process of creation, it was not possible for us to believe in God.

Atheists maintain that the progress of science and the expansion of knowledge had enabled man to observe that which was beyond his observation in the past. In the dark about chains of events, we had not been in a position to understand isolated events. Now, equipped with knowledge, we no longer stood in awe of natural phenomena. For instance, the rising and setting of the sun are now understood as matters of common knowledge. But in early times these events seemed inexplicable, and man supposed that there must be a God who was responsible for them. This led to the acceptance of there being a supernatural power : whatever was beyond man's knowledge was described by him as a miracle wrought by that power. But now that we know the rising and setting of the sun is the result of the earth's revolving upon its axis, where is the need to believe that there is a God who makes the sun rise and set? Similarly, the functioning of all other things, which had been attributed to some invisible power, purported, according to modern studies, to result from the action and interaction of the natural forces now known to us. That is, after the revelation of natural causes, the need to posit, and to believe in the existence of God, or a supernatural force, vanished of itself. If the rainbow is merely a colour effect produced by the refraction and internal reflection of sunlight in minute droplets of water in the air, it is not in any way a sign

<sup>1</sup> Religion without Revelation, New York, 1958, p. 58.



placed in the sky by God. If the plague is inevitably generated by the *Bacillus Pestis* and spread by rat-fleas, an outbreak of this disease can no longer be looked on as a sign of divine wrath. If animals and plants have slowly evolved over hundreds of millions of years, there is no room for a 'creator' of animals and plants, except in a metaphorical sense quite different from that in which the word was originally and is now normally used. If hysteria and insanity are external symptoms of disordered minds, there is no place left in them for possession by devils. Citing such events in support of his argument, Julian Huxley observes with great conviction: "If events are due to natural causes, they are not due to supernatural causes."<sup>1</sup>

He holds that their ascription to Supernatural Beings is merely due man's ignorance combined with his passion for some sort of explanation. Subsequent research carried out in the field of psychology further strengthened this point of view, as it revealed that religion is the creation of man's subconscious self rather than the discovery of some external reality. In the words of a western scholar: "God is nothing but a projection of man on a cosmic screen." The concept of another world was nothing but "a beautiful idealisation of human wishes." Divine inspiration and revelation were merely an "extraordinary expression of the childhood repressions."

All these ideas are based on the premise that there is something called the subconscious. Modern research has revealed that the human mind is divided into two major parts, one being termed the conscious mind, the centre of those of our ideas which take shape in a state of consciousness. The other part is the subconscious. In this part of the mind, ideas are not usually alive in the memory, but exist below the surface and find expression either in abnormal circumstances, or in sleep, in the form of dreams. Most human thoughts are buried in this subconscious cell, the conscious part of the mind being the smaller part. The subconscious is like the eightninths of the iceberg, which remain below water, while only one ninth, the conscious part is visible.

After extensive research in psychology, Freud discovered that, during childhood, certain happenings and ideas are repressed in our unconscious minds which can later result in the irrational behaviour of adults. The same applies to the religious concepts of the hereafter, heaven, hell, etc., Which are but echoes of those very wishes which were born in the child's mind but never fulfilled, circumstances being unfavourable, and consequently, repressed in the subconscious. Later, the subconscious, for its own satisfaction, supposed the existence of a dream world in which its unfulfilled wishes would be realized, just as, deep in sleep, one dreams of wishes coming miraculously true. When childhood fancies, which had been thoroughly repressed, suddenly burst through to the surface, producing a state of frenzy or hysteria, or other abnormal behaviour, people mistakenly attributed this to supernatural forces which had found expression in human language. Similarly, the generation gap and the 'Father complex' in a family gave rise to the concept of God and slave. Thus what was simply a social malaise was carried to the cosmic

<sup>1</sup> Religion without Revelation, pp. 18-19.



scale in order to forge a theory. In the words of Ralph Linton :

The Hebrew picture of an all-powerful deity who could only be placated by complete submission and protestations of devotion, no matter how unjust his acts might appear, was a direct outgrowth of this general Semitic family situation. Another product of the exaggerated superego to which it gave rise was the elaborate system of taboos relating to every aspect of behaviour. One system of this sort has been recorded and codified in the Laws of Moses. All Semitic tribes had similar series of regulations differing only in content. Such codes provided those who kept them with a sense of security, comparable to that of the good child who is able to remember everything that his father ever told him not to do and carefully abstains from doing it. The Hebrew Yahveh was a portrait of the Semitic father with his patriarchal authoritarian qualities abstracted and exaggerated. Such a judicial concept which believes in God being a political authority has occupied a central place not only in Judaism, but is also incorporated in the religious concepts of Christianity and Islam as well.<sup>1</sup>

The third argument against the reality of religion is provided by history. Anti-religionists maintain that it was the particular historical circumstances in which man found himself which gave birth to religious concepts. In ancient times, before the discoveries of modern science, man had no means of saving himself from natural calamities, such as floods, storms and epidemics. Frequently finding himself in insecure positions, he pictured to himself extraordinary forces which could be invoked in times of need, which could be trusted to come to his rescue in the face of disaster and which would act as a panacea of all ills. In order that society might be well-intergrated and its members firmly focussed around one central point, a cohesive force was needed. Deities of one sort or another fulfilled these needs and man then began to worship such gods as were considered superior to all human beings and whose favours had to be sought as a matter of religious duty by all individuals. The *Encyclopaedia of Social Science* has this to say :

The development of religion is also permanently influenced by political and civic forces. The attributes and the names bestowed upon the gods, automatically change in accordance with the form of the state. The God as King is merely a transposition of the human as king, the divine kingdom merely a transposition of the earthly kingdom. Moreover since the prince or king is supreme judge, the deity is likewise clothed with the judicial function and vested with the final decision as to human guilt or innocence (7, P.233)

Thus the condition of a particular historical period and the interaction of the human mind with prevailing circumstances have given birth to concepts which are collectively known as religion. Religion is a product of the human mind resulting from ignorance and a sense of helplessness in the face of external forces. Julian Huxley sums it up thus : "Religion is the product of a certain type of interaction between man and his environment."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Linton, *The Tree of Culture*, 1956, p. 288.



Since that particular environment which was responsible for bringing about this interaction has either disappeared or is disappearing, there is no further justification for the perpetuation of religion. To this Huxley adds :

The concept of God has reached the limits of its usefulness : it cannot evolve further. Supernatural powers were created by man to carry the burden of religion. From diffuse magic *mana* to personal spirits; from spirits to gods; from gods to God – so crudely speaking, the evolution has gone. The particular phase of that evolution which concerns us is that of God. In one period of our Western civilization the gods were necessary fictions, useful hypotheses by which to live.

The Communist philosophy too holds religion to be a historical hoax. Since Communism studies history exclusively in the light of economics, to it, all historical factors were offshoots of the economic situation. It holds that it was the feudal and capitalistic systems prevailing in the past that had led to the birth of religion. Now that these outdated systems are dying a natural death, religions should also be treated as dead along with it. As Engels puts it, moral concepts, in the last analysis, are the product of contemporary economic conditions. Human history is the history of class wars, in which the ruling classes have been exploiting the backward classes, and religion and morals were invented to provide an ideological basis for safeguarding the interests of the ruling class. According to the Communist Manifesto, laws, morals, religion – all are the fraudulent innovations of the Bourgeoisie under the cloak of which most of its vested interests are hidden.

Addressing the third All-Russia Congress (October, 1920) Lenin said that : of course, they did not believe in God. They knew very well that the church authorities, landlords and bourgeois who spoke with reference to God, were simply interested in safeguarding their own interests as exploiters... They denied all such moral laws, as had been borrowed from a Super-human power, or were not based on the concept of class. They called this a hoax, an illusion, the befogging of the minds of farmers and labourers in order to serve the interests of landlords and capitalists. They asserted that their moral code was subject to the class struggle of the Proletariat alone, the source of their moral principle being the interest of the Class-Struggle of the Proletariat.

This is the case put forward by the antagonists of religion, on the basis of which a large number of people in our modern age have rejected religion. An American professor of psychology sums it up thus : “Science has shown religion to be history’s cruelest and wickedest hoax.”

<sup>1</sup> Julian Huxley, *Man in the Modern World*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Julian Huxley, *Man in the Modern World*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1947, Vol. II, p. 662.

<sup>4</sup> C. A. Coulson, *Science and Christian Belief*, p.4.



# In The Name Of God, The Most Gracious, The Dispenser Of Grace:

FOREWORD (ABRIDGED)

The Message of The Qur'an - Muhammad Asad

“READ in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created  
Created man out of a germ cell!  
Read-for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One  
Who has taught (man) the use of the pen –  
Taught man what he did not know. “

With these opening verses of the ninety-sixth surah'-with an allusion to man's humble biological origin as well as to his consciousness and intellect-began, early in the seventh century of the Christian era the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad, destined to continue during the twenty-three years of his ministry and to end, shortly before his death, with verse 281 of the second surah:

“And be conscious of the Day on which you shall be brought back unto God, whereupon every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has earned, and none shall be wronged.”

Between these first and last verses (the first and the last in the chronological order of their revelation) unfolds a book which, more than any other single phenomenon known to us, has fundamentally affected the religious, social and political history of the world. No other sacred scripture has ever had a similarly immediate impact upon the lives of the people who first heard its message and, through them and the generations that followed them, on the entire course of civilization. It shook Arabia, and made a nation out of its perennially warring tribes; within a few decades, it spread its world-view far beyond the confines of Arabia and **produced the first ideological society known to man; through its insistence on consciousness and knowledge, it engendered among its followers a spirit of intellectual curiosity and independent inquiry**, ultimately resulting in that splendid era of learning and scientific research which distinguished the world of Islam at the height of its cultural vigour; and the culture thus fostered by Qur'an penetrated in countless ways and by-ways into the mind of medieval Europe and gave rise to that revival of Western culture which we call the Renaissance, and thus became in the course of time largely responsible for the birth of what is described as the "age of science": the age in which we are now living.

All this was, in the final analysis, brought about by the message of the Qur'an: and it was brought about through the medium of the people whom it inspired and to whom it supplied a basis for all their ethical valuations and a direction for all their worldly endeavours: for, never has any book-not excluding the Bible-been read by so many with a comparable intensity and veneration; and never has any other book supplied to so many, and over so long a span of time, a similarly comprehensive answer to the question, **“How shall I behave in order to achieve the good life in this world and happiness in the life to come?”** However often individual Muslims may have misread this answer, and however far many of them may have departed from the spirit of its message, the fact remains that to all who believed and believe in it, the Quran represents the ultimate manifestation of God's grace to man, the ultimate wisdom, and the ultimate beauty of expression: in short, the true Word of God. This attitude of the Muslims towards the Qur'an perplexes, as a rule, the Westerner who approaches it through one or another of the many existing translations. It is more than probable that one of the main reasons for this lack of appreciation is to be found in that aspect of the Qur'an which differentiates it fundamentally from all other sacred scriptures: its stress on reason as a valid way to faith as well as its insistence on the inseparability of the spiritual and the physical (and, therefore, also social) spheres of human existence: the inseparability of man's daily actions and behaviour, however **“mundane”**, from his spiritual life and destiny. This absence of any division of reality into **“physical”** and **“spiritual”** compartments makes it difficult for people brought up in the orbit of other religions, with their accent on the **“supernatural”** element allegedly inherent in every true religious experience, to appreciate the predominantly rational approach of the Qur'an to all religious questions. Consequently, its constant interweaving of spiritual teachings with practical legislation perplexes the Western reader, who has become accustomed to identifying **“religious experience”** with a thrill of numinous awe before things hidden and beyond all intellectual comprehension, and is suddenly confronted with the claim of the Qur'an to being a guidance not only towards the spiritual good of the hereafter but also towards the good life-spiritual, physical and social-attainable in this world. In short, the Westerner cannot readily accept the Qur'anic thesis that all life, being God-given, is a unity, and that problems of the flesh and of the mind, of sex and economics, of individual righteousness and social equity are intimately connected with the hopes which man may legitimately entertain with regard to his life after death. This, in my opinion, is one of the reasons for the negative, uncomprehending attitude of most Westerners towards the Qur'an and its teachings. But still another-and perhaps even more decisive-reason may be found in the fact that the Qur'an itself has never yet been presented in any European language in a manner which would make it truly comprehensible.

THE WORK, which I am now placing before the public is based on a lifetime of study and of many years spent in



Arabia. It is an attempt-perhaps the first attempt at a really idiomatic, explanatory rendition of the Qur'anic message into a European language.

To this end, the translator must be guided throughout by the linguistic usage prevalent at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, and must always bear in mind that some of its expressions-especially such as relate to abstract concepts-have in the course of time undergone a subtle change in the popular mind and should not, therefore, be translated in accordance with the sense given to them by post-classical usage. As has been pointed out by that great Islamic scholar, Muhammad Abduh, even some of the renowned, otherwise linguistically reliable Qur'an-commentators have occasionally erred in this respect; and their errors, magnified by the inadequacy of modern translators, have led to many distortion, and sometimes to a total incomprehensibility, of individual Qur'anic passages in their European renditions.

Furthermore, one must beware of rendering, in each and every case, the religious terms used in the Qur'an in the sense which they have acquired after Islam had become "institutionalized" into a definite set of laws, tenets and practices. However legitimate this "institutionalization" may be in the context of Islamic religious history, it is obvious that the Qur'an cannot be correctly understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, losing sight of its original purport and the meaning which it had and was intended to have-for the people who first heard it from the lips of the Prophet himself. For instance, when his contemporaries heard the words Islam and Muslim, they understood them as denoting man's "self surrender to God" and "one who surrenders himself to God", without limiting these terms to any specific community or denomination-e.g., in 3: 67, where Abraham is spoken of as having "surrendered himself unto God" (kana musliman), or in 3:52, where the disciples of Jesus say, "Bear thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves unto God (bi-anna muslimun)". In Arabic, this original meaning has remained unimpaired, and no Arab scholar has ever become oblivious of the wide connotation of these terms. Not so, however, the non-Arab of our day, believer and non-believer alike: to him, Islam and Muslim usually bear a restricted, historically circumscribed significance, and apply exclusively to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. Similarly, the terms kufr ("denial of the truth") and kafir ("one who denies the truth") have become, in the conventional translations of the Qur'an, unwarrantably simplified into "unbelief" and "unbeliever" or "infidel", respectively, and have thus been deprived of the wide spiritual meaning which the Qur'an gives to these terms.

Firstly, the Qur'an must not be viewed as a compilation of individual injunctions and exhortations but as one integral whole: that is, as an exposition of an ethical doctrine in which every verse and sentence has an intimate bearing on other verses and sentences, all of them clarifying and amplifying one another. Consequently, its real meaning can be grasped only if we correlate every one of its statements with what has been stated elsewhere in its pages, and try to explain its ideas by means of frequent cross references, always subordinating the particular to the general and the incidental to the intrinsic. Whenever this rule is faithfully followed, we realize that the Qur'an-is in the words of Muhammad Abduh- "its own best commentary".

Secondly, no part of the Qur'an should be viewed from a purely historical point of view: that is to say, all its references to historical circumstances and events-both at the time of the Prophet and in earlier times-must be regarded as illustrations of the human condition and not as ends in themselves. Hence, the consideration of the historical occasion on which a particular verse was revealed-a pursuit so dear, and legitimately so, to the hearts of the classical commentators-must never be allowed to obscure the underlying purport of that verse and its inner relevance to the ethical teaching which the Qur'an, taken as a whole, propounds.

But although none of the truly original, classical Qur'an-commentators ever made any claim to "finality" concerning his own interpretations, it cannot be often enough stressed that without the work of those incomparably great scholars of past centuries, no modern translation of the Qur'an - my own included - could ever be undertaken with any hope of success; and so, even where I differ from their interpretations, I am immeasurably indebted to their learning for the impetus it has given to my own search after truth.

AS REGARDS the style of my translation, I have consciously avoided using unnecessary archaisms, which would only tend to obscure the meaning of the Qur'an to the contemporary reader. I make no claim to having reproduced anything of the indescribable rhythm and rhetoric of the Qur'an. No one who has truly experienced its majestic beauty could ever be presumptuous enough to make such a claim or even to embark upon such an attempt. And I am fully aware that my rendering does not and could not really "do justice" to the Qur'an and the layers upon the layers of its meaning: for,

**"if all the seas were ink for my Sustainer's words, the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer's words are exhausted."** (Qur'an 18:109).

If you behave properly with those holding divergent views from you,  
then you deserve to be credited with having an excellent character.



THE FIRST SURAH  
AL-FATIHAH [THE OPENING]  
MECCA PERIOD

THIS SURAH is also called *Fatihah al-Kitab* ["The Opening of the Divine Writ"], *Umm al-Kitab* ["The Essence of the Divine Writ"], *Surat al-Hamd* ["The Surah of Praise"], *Asas al-Qur'an* ["The Foundation of the Qur'an"], and is known by several other names as well. It is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'an as *As-sab' al-mathani* ["the seven Oft-Repeated [verses]"] because it is repeated several times in the course of each of the five daily prayers. According to Bukhari, the designation *Umm al-kitab* was given to it by the prophet himself, and this in view of the fact that it contains, in a condensed form, all the fundamental principles laid down in the Qur'an: the principle of God's oneness and uniqueness, of His being the originator and fosterer of the universe, the fount of all life-giving grace, the One to whom man is ultimately responsible, the only power that can really guide and help; the call to righteous action in the life of this world ["guide us the straight way"]; the principle of life after death and of the organic consequences of man's actions and behaviour [expressed in the term "Day of Judgement"]; the principle of guidance through God's message-bearers [evident in the reference to "those upon whom God has bestowed His blessings"] and, flowing from it, the principle of the continuity of all true religions [implied in the allusion to people who have lived-and erred- in the past]; and, finally, the need for voluntary self-surrender to the will of the Supreme Being and, thus, for worshipping Him alone; It is for this reason that this surah has been formulated as a prayer to be constantly repeated and reflected upon by the believer.

"The Opening" was one of the earliest revelations bestowed upon the Prophet. Some authorities [for instance, Ali ibn Abi Talib] were even of the opinion that it was the very first revelation; but this view is contradicted by authentic Traditions quoted by both Bukhari and Muslim, which unmistakably show that the first five verses of surah 96 ["The Germ-Cell"] constituted the beginning of revelation. It is probable, however, that whereas the earlier revelations consisted of only a few verses each, *The Opening* was the first surah revealed to the Prophet in its entirety at one time: and this would explain the view held by Ali.

[1] IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST GRACIOUS.  
THE DISPENSER OF GRACE

[2] **ALL PRAISE** is due to God alone, the Sustainer  
of all the worlds,<sup>2</sup> [3] the Most Gracious, the

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1 According to most of the authorities, this invocation [which occurs at the beginning of every surah with the exception of surah 9] constitutes an integral part of "The Opening" and is, therefore, numbered as verse 1. In all other instances, "in the name of God" precedes the surah as such, and is not counted among its verses. Both the divine epithets *rahman* and *rahim* are derived from the noun *rahmah* which signifies "mercy", "compassion", "loving tenderness" and more comprehensively, "grace". From the very earliest times, Islamic scholars have endeavoured to define the exact shades of meaning which differentiate the two terms. The best and simplest of these explanations is undoubtedly the one advanced by Ibn al-Qayyim [as quoted in *Manar* I, 48]: the term *rahman* circumscribes the quality of abounding grace inherent in, and inseparable from, the concept of God's Being whereas *rahim* expresses the manifestation of that grace in, and its effect upon, His



Dispenser of Grace, [4] Lord of the Day of Judgment.

[5] Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid

[6] Guide us the straight way- [7] the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings,<sup>3</sup> not of those who have been condemned [by Thee,] nor of those who go astray.<sup>4</sup>

creation -in other words, an aspect of His activity.

2 In this instance, the term "worlds" denotes all categories of existence both in the physical and the *spiritual* sense. The Arabic expression *rabb*-rendered by me as "Sustainer"- embraces a wide complex of meanings not easily expressed by a single term in another language. It comprises the ideas of having a just claim to the possession of anything and consequently over it, as well as of rearing, sustaining and fostering anything from its inception to its final completion. Thus, the head of a family is called *rabb ad-dar*[" master of the house"]because he has authority over it and is responsible for its maintenance; similarly, his wife is called *rabbat ad-dar* ["mistress of the house"] .Preceded by the definite article *al*, the designation *rabb* is applied, in the Qur'an exclusively to God as the sole fosterer and sustainer of all creation -objective as well as conceptual -and therefore the ultimate source of all authority.

3 I.e. by vouchsafing to them prophetic guidance and enabling them to avail themselves thereof.

4 According to almost all the commentators, God's "condemnation"[*ghadab*, lit., Wrath"] is synonymous with the evil consequences which man brings upon himself by wilfully rejecting God's guidance and acting contrary to His injunctions. Some commenatators [e.g; *Zamakhshari*] interpret this passage as follows:"... The way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings - those who have not been condemned [by Thee], and who do not go astray" in other words, they regard the last two expressions as defining "those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings"Other commentators [e.g. *Baghawi* and *Ibn kathir*] do not subscribe to this interpretation -which would imply the use of negative definitions-and understand the last verse of the surah in the manner rendered by me above. As regards the two categories of people following a wrong course, some of the greatest Islamic thinkers [e.g., *Al-Ghazali* or, in recent times. *Muhammad Abduh*] held the view that the people described as having incurred "God's condemnation-that is, having deprived themselves of his grace - are those who have become fully cognizant of God's message and, having understood it have rejected it; while by "those who go astray" are meant people whom the truth has either not reached at all, or to whom it has come in so garbled and corrupted a form as to make it difficult for them to recognize it as the truth [see *Abduh* in *Manar* I,68 ff.]